

AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE FOR AMERICA ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. STEVE ISRAEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Saturday, November 7, 2009

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Affordable Health Care for America Act. I join the American Cancer Society, the American Medical Association, the American Nurses Association, Consumers Union, AARP, and many other organizations in the strong belief that this bill will bring financial relief to middle class families and businesses who have faced skyrocketing costs for health care.

In the past months, I have listened carefully to the families and businesses I represent on Long Island. I held many public forums on health care; visited businesses facing double digit premium increases; met with physicians and toured hospitals; invited protesters into my office to hear their concerns; convened a tele-town hall that attracted 5,000 senior citizens; hosted another tele-town hall meeting with nearly 11,000 people; organized a live town hall meeting at Suffolk Community College with 500 people; made hundreds of personal phone calls to constituents; and much more.

People with strong opinions on opposite sides of this issue have insisted that I listen to them, believing that they represent a majority of our community. And at the end of the day, I believe strongly that we can no longer do business as usual. In the past 10 years, Long Islanders have seen their health insurance premiums increase 80 percent. And if we do nothing, the average Long Islanders' health costs will increase \$1,800 every year.

Employer-sponsored health insurance premiums have increased 80 percent in 10 years for Long Island businesses. As a result, more companies are forced to cut payroll, trim raises, or increase employee contributions. Some have told me if this continues, they will have to begin considering offering no health insurance.

And almost every week, my office in Hauppauge receives complaints from neighbors who were denied insurance coverage due to preexisting conditions. They complain about "sticker shock" when they open their insurance company statement and learn that they'll have to pay for a greater share of services they assumed were covered.

In a region with unacceptably high property taxes and energy costs, we simply cannot afford to allow health care to continue skyrocketing.

The original bill did contain provisions that concerned me. As a result of my town meetings and other visits, I was able to help improve the bill.

For example:

Many Long Islanders complained that the original family income trigger for the surtax that will fund nearly half of this bill was too low. I successfully fought to raise the trigger to \$1 million per family. As a result, no Long Island family with earnings less than \$1 million will see a surtax to pay for this bill.

I worked to increase the trigger for small business health care from \$250,000 to \$500,000 in payroll.

Many seniors in Medicare Part D prescription drug plans asked for faster relief from the

so called "donut hole." In 2010, they will receive an immediate \$500 expanded benefit. That will assist 8,000 seniors in our district alone.

To lower drug costs, I fought to include a provision allowing the Department of Health and Human Services to negotiate volume discounts with big drug companies, just like the VA does.

I sought to increase funding for the Family Caregiver Support program to help Americans who take care of their parents or grandparents.

Some argued that insurance should be sold across State lines. This bill would allow companies to sell plans across State lines where States joined together to form interstate compacts to allow it.

Before accessing the newly created Health Insurance Exchange, one's citizenship and immigration status will be verified by the Department of Homeland Security.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard some insist that this bill represents a government takeover of health care. It is simply not true. All the bill does is give Long Islanders the choice to enter into a competitive Health Insurance Exchange to shop for a health insurance plan—just like every Member of Congress. There, private companies will compete for one's business. Among those private businesses will be a "public option" which must be self-sufficient and funded from premiums paid by its enrollees. That option will not need to worry about dividends or profits, CEO salaries or expensive marketing campaigns. It will compete against the private plans: just like public colleges compete against private colleges, just like ExpressMail competes against FedEx, just like Perrier competes against the Suffolk County Water Authority. I haven't heard anyone call the water they drink from their faucets "socialist water". And I've not heard any reasonable person call Medicare socialized health care. The reason the public option is so vital is that its lower costs will incentivize insurance companies who have doubled their premiums to be more price sensitive in order to attract customers.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, a special word for those who have demanded that I "listen to them." We tend to see the world through our own eyes, leaving very little room for what may be outside our vision. People on polar opposites of this issue have understandably demanded that I "listen to them." Both claim to represent a majority of Long Islanders. I don't pay much attention to polls, Mr. Speaker, but a recent poll in Newsday indicated that 70 percent of Long Islanders support the public option. I will say that after that poll, some of the same people who demanded I listen to the majority told me the majority doesn't know what it's talking about so I should ignore it.

I made a final judgment by listening carefully to everyone. I fought and delivered improvements in this bill. Is it perfect? No. Government can never be perfect, and I'll continue to demand that it be more competent. But this bill, for the first time, will give Americans more choice and control over a virtual health insurance monopoly and will finally end the days when someone who has faithfully paid their premiums from hearing that their diabetes, their cancer, their children's autism, are no longer covered.

JO LYNN OSBORNE

HON. ED PERLMUTTER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 16, 2009

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor and applaud Jo Lynn Osborne for her outstanding service to our community.

Jo Lynn Osborne has served as an advocate for the rights of the disabled since 1980. She began her career as a secretary at the Arc in Jefferson County where she quickly moved into program development. In 1989 she created the Mobilizing Families program, which has won national awards and has been translated into several languages.

The dedication demonstrated by Jo Lynn Osborne directly benefits her community, and is exemplary of her high personal and professional standards. Through individualized advocacy, Jo Lynn Osborne has personally helped thousands of individuals and families achieve greater levels of independence.

Today Jo Lynn Osborne is interim executive director for the Arc in Jefferson County, an active member of the Alameda West Kiwanis Club, and a strong community leader.

I extend my deepest congratulations once again to Jo Lynn Osborne for her recognition by the West Chamber of Jefferson County. I have no doubt she will exhibit the same dedication and character in all her future accomplishments.

TRIBUTE TO LANDSTUHL REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER HOSPITAL PERSONNEL

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 16, 2009

Mr. SKELTON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to personally thank and commend the 2,837 personnel—including Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and Department of Defense civilians and contractors, and coalition liaisons from Canada, Poland, Jordan, and Australia—of the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany.

These dedicated folks do yeoman's work in providing world class comprehensive care to our warriors wounded in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom and to more than 52,000 American military personnel and their families in the Kaiserslautern Military Community. They also provide specialized care to nearly 245,000 American military personnel and their families throughout the European Theater.

I can personally attest to the phenomenal work done at Landstuhl. During a visit to Iraq over Thanksgiving 2005, Congressman TIM MURPHY and I were injured in a motor vehicle accident. After receiving excellent care at the Combat Support Hospital in Baghdad, we were moved by C-17 to Landstuhl. I spent several days in room 7 of the Intensive Care Unit there. It is not an understatement to say that the care I received was outstanding. I am sure any of our troops who have been treated there and their families would attest to the same.

Along with my committee's ranking member, BUCK McKEON, I will soon be leading a congressional delegation to visit wounded

servicemembers and all who care for them at Landstuhl for Thanksgiving dinner. Given the spirit of that holiday, this statement—which I will frame to present to the personnel there—is a fitting tribute to the excellence they deliver every day.

Landstuhl averages over 1,000 total inpatients per month, with a daily average of 20 surgical cases, and 21 admissions and discharges per day. They also bring new life into the world, with an average of three live births per day. They provide specialized care in fields ranging from cardiology to infectious disease to neurology. If it is medically possible, the professionals at Landstuhl make it happen. Our servicemembers know that they and their families will be taken care of.

Perhaps most importantly, though, Landstuhl plays a critical role in caring for our warriors wounded in combat and bringing them back home. After initial treatment in theater, critical care air transport teams bring wounded servicemembers to Landstuhl for stabilization and treatment before being transported to Andrews Air Force Base. The folks at Landstuhl see the vast majority of our wounded and injured in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, and they administer the best that modern medicine has to offer.

I also praise the nonmedical services offered at Landstuhl, including liaisons for finance and personnel issues, invitational travel orders for family members and transportation from the airport, issuance of basic civilian clothing and sundry items, and AAFES vouchers and personal shoppers, among other services. This comprehensive care provides the right environment to begin the healing process.

Here, I must also thank those who embody the giving spirit of our Nation. I speak, of course, of the selfless service of the American Red Cross volunteers, Fisher House volunteers and staff, and the members of the USO who make themselves available to our servicemembers and their families 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. No need is too big or too small and no problem too difficult for this group. Their perseverance, creativity, and unyielding commitment to helping others have humbled many a hardened warrior, and we are indeed fortunate to have their support.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to think that we have such an immensely capable group of people looking after the health and well-being of servicemembers and their families. As chairman of the Armed Services Committee and as a former patient, I pay great tribute to the excellence and sacrifice of all who serve at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center. They all deserve our thanks and support.

HONORING BREAK THE BARRIERS

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 16, 2009

Mr. RADANOVICH. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend and congratulate Break the Barriers upon celebrating its 25th anniversary. The organization's anniversary will be celebrated on Wednesday, October 21, 2009, in Fresno, CA.

Ken and Carrie Mullen, Ice Capades performers, had two daughters, Deby and Kathy.

Deby was a phenomenal athlete, and at the age of ten began taking gymnastics at the Fresno Gymnastics Club. By the time Deby was sixteen, she had become a regional, state and national gymnastics champion. Kathy also excelled in gymnastics. Although she was born with Down Syndrome, she was able to emulate Deby and competed in the Special Olympics. Deby was beginning to look toward international competition when her gymnastics dreams were cut short by a devastating ankle injury. The injury did not stop her love for the sport. Inspired by her sister Kathy, Deby recognized her calling and began to coach adults who had different physical, neurological and mental abilities.

Deby married Steve Hergenrader, a former New York Yankees baseball player. The couple worked on Steve's grandfather's 20-acre grape vineyard and started a club called, The Tri-City Olympiads. Eventually, they created the Fresno District Special Olympics Gymnastics Program.

Deby and Steve moved away from the family vineyard and found a house that was large enough to house a dance studio inside and gymnastics equipment in the back yard, including old bed mattresses, a trampoline, balance beam, and a vaulting horse with a spring board. This new enterprise was Gymnastics by Deby.

After many years of working with people with various abilities, Deby began to recognize that the barriers that separate one person's ability from another is the lack of opportunity to do anything in common together. Through Deby and Steve's integrated sports and performing arts classes, the students found common ground. The students began learning from one another and all of the students were successful. Without any advertising, the combined classes grew to include 200 children from the age of 3 through adult. A survey conducted of local dance studios, gyms, self-defense classes and baton twirling studios determined that there were no successful programs that integrated students of various abilities. With this knowledge, student's parents helped to form a board of directors and Break the Barriers was created. The organization was officially incorporated as a nonprofit in October 1985, with the mission to "Break all barriers experienced by people with different abilities."

In 1987 the performing group, the Barrier Breakers, was established. The team is a combination of performers, each with amazing abilities, and range in age from 6 to adult. There are currently 58 performers on the team and they perform around the world. There are over 3,000 students that participate in the programs including aquatics, dance, gymnastics, martial arts and sign language. Break the Barriers also provides a buddy program, day camps and health and fitness classes. The programs are made up of students from eight different school districts.

Today at Break the Barriers Steve and Deby, along with their children Jared and Tyler, continue to be dedicated to their original purpose; to break down barriers through a common purpose.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend and congratulate Break the Barriers on 25 years of breaking all barriers and allowing people with different abilities to perform together. I invite my colleagues to join me in wishing Break the Barriers many years of continued success.

RECOGNIZING THE KOREAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY SERVICES

HON. MIKE QUIGLEY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 16, 2009

Mr. QUIGLEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the Korean American Community Services and its 32nd Annual Health Fair. The Korean American Community Services has partnered with many health organizations over the past 32 years in holding its Annual Health Fair. Through the fair, the Korean American Community Services reaffirms its strong commitment to individual and family health and has become a celebration of the collective well-being of the community.

The Korean American Community Services organizes and coordinates Federal, State and community-based health services. These services aim to ensure that immigrant families who are often uninsured are able to gain access to necessary health services. In order to do this the Korean American Community Service offers referral services, case management, interpretation, outreach and public benefit workshops. Annually, more than 8,000 people benefit from these services as they continue to promote and protect health in the community.

It is my honor to recognize the Korean American Community Services and its 32nd Annual Health Fair. The Annual Health Fair is significant as it continues to recognize and uphold the importance of health in the community. I thank the Korean American Community Services for its Annual Health Fair and its continued dedication to strengthening the community.

GENERAL ARTHUR J. LICHT RE-TIRES AFTER 38 YEARS' SERVICE WITH THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

HON. CATHY McMORRIS RODGERS

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 16, 2009

Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize General Arthur J. Lichte on the occasion of his retirement from the United States Air Force.

General Lichte grew up in Bronx, N.Y., where he graduated from Cardinal Spellman High School. In 1971, he entered the Air Force as a distinguished graduate of the ROTC program at Manhattan College. General Lichte's Air Force career includes command positions at squadron, group, and wing levels and as a command pilot; he has logged more than 5,000 flying hours in various aircraft. In addition to his command experience, General Lichte has held headquarters-level assignments at Strategic Air Command, Air Mobility Command, United States Air Forces Europe, U.S. Air Force and U.S. Transportation Command. His latest assignment as Commander of the Air Mobility Command began in September 2007.

General Lichte's journey to Air Mobility Command includes many notable achievements. As the 9th Air Refueling Commander at March Air Force Base, he led Strategic Air Command's first mission to the People's Republic of China, and as the acting Second